

Business Value of Agile



SPONSORED CONTENT: Relocation Transformation Through Technology and Focus

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Although incremental software engineering in general, and Agile methodology in particular, are considered 21st century innovations, tech companies have been practicing iterative and incremental development (IID) since at least the 1950s.

According to Craig Larman and Victor R. Basili in their [June 2003 article in *Computer magazine*](#) [subscription required]: “Thought leaders from each succeeding decade supported ID practices, and many large projects used them successfully. These practices may have differed in their details, but all had a common theme to avoid a single pass sequential, document-driven, gated-step approach.”

“Single pass sequential, document-driven, gated-step approach” is certainly a mouthful, but the more common term for this approach is “Waterfall.” This is a helpful image in that it inherently illustrates the concept of progress in one direction. Just like areal waterfall flows ever-downward, never reversing course, so does Waterfall development flow in a single direction, with developers needing to complete each phase in a product’s lifecycle before moving on to the next. The end result is a finished product that, 18-24 months later, may be extremely well planned out and precisely documented—but is also unlikely to meet its customers’ ever-evolving needs.

The Futility of Fragility in the Age of Mobility Agility

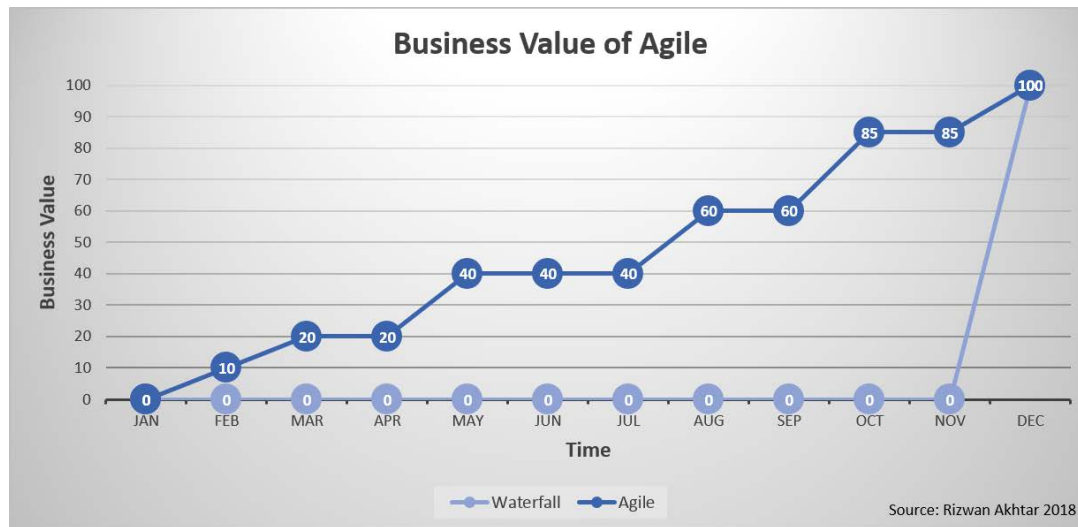
Relocation has traditionally been resistant to rapid change, in part because we are such a people-focused business. Our customers have very concrete concerns, like how quickly is my home going to sell, or when are my household goods going to arrive? As a result, relocation companies don’t have the luxury of following the old Silicon Valley mantra, “Move Fast and Break Things.” The question then becomes: how can we continue to innovate at the pace our market requires while ensuring that the customer experience remains our top priority?

One solution is to go Agile. The nature of your business—whether B2B or B2C, SaaS or IaaS—and the diverse needs of your users, will dictate what type of Agile framework works best for your organization. One trap to avoid is what I call “Agile for Agile’s sake.” If your objective is to be called an “Agile-certified” organization, then you need to reevaluate what you’re truly hoping to accomplish. The key question is: how can Agile help us accomplish our business objectives successfully, but faster?

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The graphic below illustrates why it's important to deliver features in an Agile manner as the need for them is established. You can't wait to "complete" a product before you launch. You launch a product, receive feedback from the market, and then release features incrementally as they become available.



APIs: Building Blocks for a Digital Toy Box

One foundational component of Agile strategy is embracing an API-based framework. Perhaps the simplest way to think of an API—which stands for “Application Programming Interface”—is as a digital Lego®. Each block in and of itself is a discrete entity, but when you put those blocks together, you make something entirely new.

APIs are similar in that each API is a specific building block designed to complete a capability or product. A company's ability to define that rudimentary set of building blocks that can be used across many different products is what makes an API strategy so valuable.

APIs also make your capabilities available across any channel. For example, if you have to provide an update on the status of a household goods delivery to a website *and* a phone *and* a smart watch, you don't want to construct that "block" multiple times. You simply build the API in a way that allows it to simultaneously feed online, mobile, and wearable channels.

This is especially crucial given the wide range of generations to which relocation companies cater. Each demographic has different needs and expectations in terms of the way they interact with us, and the way they would like us to interact with them.

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For example, baby boomers probably prefer more high-touch or white-glove treatment—more personal interactions like phone calls versus email. Millennials probably favor a mobile-based approach—whether that's via text or an app—where they can quickly see how their relocation is progressing. And someone from Gen Z might like an occasional update on something like a smartwatch to keep them informed without consuming a lot of their time.

The (Single Source of) Truth is Out There

“Single Source of Truth” refers to the ability to access consistent information from a singular data repository. This same data can then be used to power the business capabilities that define the products and services a business provides within its digital ecosystem, which is what many companies are moving toward.

These business capabilities are responsible for performing different functions or offering important information to clients and customers. If you think about a core capability—in Cartus’ case, for example, the ability of a predictive analytics product like **MovePro Vision** SM to forecast future move volumes, or **MovePro Timeline** SM to forecast key move dates—all of those capabilities can be connected into different channels from a single source of truth to move the relocation forward at the client or individual customer level.



The key to all of it is data. Once a company truly understands the data it has available, it’s going to reveal a world that nobody has seen before, and that will offer a great deal of opportunity—if the organization can capitalize on it.

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